Astell & Kern’s $1,799 music player lets you switch between DACs

Astell & Kern says its latest audio player is the first in the world to come with DACs from two separate manufacturers, letting you switch between them to customize the sound to your wired headphones. The $1,799 A&futura SE200 includes DACs from both AKM (AK4499EQ) and ESS (dual ES9068AS), which have their own AMP circuits tailored to their individual sounds. After picking a DAC, the sound can be customized further with a series of audio filters.

High end audio devices usually include high-quality DACs. LG often differentiates its phones by incorporating a quad-DAC system and headphone jack for better sound. However, this is the first time we’ve seen a company include DACs from two different manufacturers, purely to let listeners fine-tune their audio.

As expected from a music player that costs $1,799, the SE200 supports almost any music file you can throw at it. It’ll play native 32-bit/384kHz and DSD256 files, and there’s also MQA support so it can play or stream hi-res audio files encoded in the format – handy if you’re a subscriber to Tidal’s HiFi membership plan and want to stream its Master-quality music. There’s 256GB of onboard storage, a microSD card slot that can expand it by up to 1TB, Wi-Fi connectivity, Bluetooth AptX HD, and battery life is rated at up to 14 hours.

Externally, the SE200 is controlled via its 5.0-inch 720p display, and there’s a volume wheel that will light up in different colors to show details about the music that’s

currently playing, including its bit-rate, or which DAC is currently in use. There’s a USB-C port for charging, and you can also use the player as an external DAC for your Mac or Windows computer.

In addition to playing locally stored files, the player is also compatible with a range of streaming services including Apple Music, Amazon Music, Spotify, Tidal, SoundCloud, Deezer, and more. Additional services can be added by downloading and installing the appropriate Android APK.

$1,799 is a lot to spend on a digital audio player, but on a DAC-per-dollar basis the A&futura SE200 looks ever so slightly less obscene.

https://www.theverge.com/2020/6/26/21304140/astell-kerns-1799-music-player-lets-you-switch-between-dacs